



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee.
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Proposal regarding Village Open Space</b>
<b>Date:</b>	8 August 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen Walker, Departmental Portfolio Programme Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The purpose of this report is to inform Members of a request by the NI Housing Executive and Fold Housing Association, that the Council consider accepting the transfer of a portion of land and its associated management and public liability in the Village Area of South Belfast.</p> <p>A copy of the proposal is attached as Appendix A.</p> <p>A brief overview of the background is attached as Appendix B.</p> <p>The Housing Executive has completed a comprehensive review of the Village area of South Belfast and the project is now entering its final phase which includes 27 new dwellings. A planning application is scheduled to be submitted in the coming weeks and an element of the proposal will be for an area of public open space. This is a requirement by Planning Service owing to the lack of open space in the general area.</p> <p>The development will be delivered by Fold Housing Association who is the strategic housing provider in the area. The open space will be overlooked by dwellings on all sides and will be functional and usable by all in the wider local community and not exclusively Fold HA tenants. The proposal is to integrate the existing play area and pitch at Moltke Street into the new area of open space. The road junction at Moltke Street/Nubia Street and Kitchener Drive will be removed. This will further benefit users of the open space by diverting traffic away from it. The Housing Executive is taking forward this aspect of the proposal with Road Service.</p> <p>The costs of providing the open space as required by Planning Service, based on a grassed area with paths throughout, surrounded by dwarf walls and</p>

	<p>railings, has been estimated at £225k.</p> <p>The Housing Executive and Fold Housing Association have asked that the Council undertake the maintenance and public liability of the open space. This would involve the transfer of the land to the Council.</p>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>In considering its position on this matter the Committee may wish to reflect on the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Council owns and maintains the existing play area and pitch which will be integrated into the new area and open space. The additional maintenance of the grassed area is considered to be relatively minor.</li> <li>2. The Council has in the past looked favourably on requests from organisations to take on the maintenance and public liability responsibilities;</li> <li>3. As has been highlighted in previous reports, the cumulative impact of the additional maintenance and public liability responsibilities could potentially place an increased burden on the Council at a time when budgets are constrained;</li> <li>4. This particular request comes from a housing body, whose primary duty may not relate to the management of open space, however, as members will be aware the provision of open, recreational and leisure space is often a planning requirement and planning may be withheld unless provision is made; Members should be mindful that this may set a precedent for similar housing developments and may result in future requests;</li> </ol>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The financial cost of the ongoing revenue maintenance is not known at this time. However, it is anticipated that as the facility is mainly grassed, the maintenance should be relatively minor.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>This will increase the workload of staff in the area.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>The provision of the open space as part of the housing development will improve the general environment.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>

4.1	There are no equality implications
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<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	The Committee is asked to accede to the request to accept the transfer of land and its associated maintenance and public liability in the Village Area of South Belfast. This decision is subject to approval at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
An update report will be brought to Committee in April 2013.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
None	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix A – Drawing of proposed scheme. Appendix B – Outline of background to the proposed scheme.	